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CLAIMS

1. A hair conditioning composition with a pH of 8 or less comprising:

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(a) 0.01% to 10% by weight of one or more cationic surfactants;

(b) 0.01% to 10% by weight of one or more fatty alcohols having from 8 to 22 carbon atoms;

10 (c) 0.001% to 5% by weight of a hydrophobically modified clay; and

(d) water,

wherein the weight ratio of cationic surfactant to fatty alcohol is from 1:1 to 1:10.

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2. A composition as claimed in Claim 1, which further comprises one or more hair fibre modifying agents that are capable of reducing the stiffness of a hair fibre.

20 3. A composition as claimed in Claim 2, wherein the hair fibre modifying agents are selected from: mineral oils; functionalised oils comprising one or more groups selected from ether, ester, keto, aldehyde, carboxyl, alcohol, diol, polyol, amino, amido, thiol and thioether, and containing 8  
25 to 44 carbon atoms; saccharide polyesters; silicone oils; and triglyceride oils.

4. A composition as claimed in Claim 3, wherein the hair fibre modifying agent is a hydrocarbon oil.

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5. A composition as claimed in Claim 2 wherein the hair fibre modifying agents are selected from: amino acids; urea; methyl amines and their N-oxides; mono-, di- or poly-carboxylic acids; carbohydrates; and polyols.

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6. A composition as claimed in Claim 5, wherein the hair fibre modifying agent is urea.

7. A composition as claimed in any one of Claims 2 to 6,  
10 wherein the one or more hair fibre modifying agents are present in the composition in an amount of from 0.01% to 2% by weight.

8. A composition as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 7,  
15 wherein the hydrophobically modified clay is an expandable three-layer clay comprising at least 75% by weight of the clay of atoms selected from oxygen, silicon and aluminum and/or magnesium.

9. A composition as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 8,  
20 wherein the hydrophobically modified clay is a hydrophobically treated bentonite clay.

10. A composition as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 9,  
25 wherein the clay is hydrophobically modified by exchange into the clay of cations comprising one or more alkyl groups containing from 6 to 30 carbon atoms.

11. A composition as claimed in Claim 10, wherein the  
30 cations have the formula  $N^+R^1R^2R^3R^4$  wherein  $R^1$ ,  $R^2$ ,  $R^3$  and  $R^4$

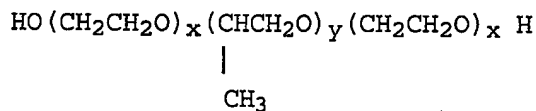
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are independently (C<sub>1</sub> to C<sub>30</sub>) alkyl or benzyl and, optionally, the alkyl groups may comprise one or more ester (-OCO- or -COO-) and/or ether (-O-) linkages within the alkyl chain.

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12. A composition as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 11 which further comprises from 0.01% to 5% by weight of a silicone.

- 10 13. A composition as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 12 which further comprises a block copolymer with a mean molecular weight of 1000 unified atomic mass units or more, comprising polyethyleneoxide and polypropyleneoxide blocks, selected from the group consisting of (i) poloxamers
- 15 according to formula I:

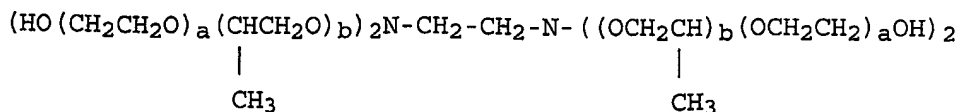


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wherein the mean value of y is from 18 to 60 and the mean value x is from 7 to 140 such that the mean value of the ratio x/y is from 0.4 to 3.0.

and (ii) poloxamines according to formula II:

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wherein the mean value of a is 2 or more and the mean value of b is 2 or more.

14. A method of treating hair which comprises applying to  
5 the hair a composition of any one of Claims 1 to 13.

15. Use of a hydrophobically modified clay for imparting conditioning benefits to hair.

10 16. Use as claimed in Claim 15, wherein the hydrophobically modified clay is a clay which is hydrophobically modified by exchange into the clay of cations comprising one or more alkyl groups containing from 6 to 30 carbon atoms.

15 17. Use as claimed in Claim 15 or Claim 16 wherein the hydrophobically modified clay is present in a rinse off hair conditioning composition.

18. Use as claimed in any one of Claims 15 to 17, wherein  
20 the hydrophobically modified clay is used together with a hydrocarbon oil or urea.